

Frequently Asked Questions About the 1999 Adopted Budget

How much is the 1999 King County Adopted Budget?

In 1999 the King County Budget will total more than \$2.6 billion. Of this amount, \$424 million (\$ 428 million including CX Transfers to CIP) is contained in the Current Expense Fund. The Current Expense Fund is the County's General Fund which pays for direct services of jails, police, parks, human services, and administrative departments. \$671 million is dedicated for transit, wastewater treatment, health, roads and solid waste; and \$676 million is committed to capital improvement for roads, parks, and other major public facilities.

Is there anything new in this budget?

Growing demands for criminal justice services continue to challenge King County government. This budget includes additional resources necessary both to respond to the increased demands on the criminal justice system and to implement innovative ways of doing business. One of the more innovative initiatives in the Adopted Budget is the establishment of a Mental Health Court. The goal of the Court is to help mentally ill defendants stop cycling through the criminal justice system by linking them to mental health services. The Court is a collaborative effort between criminal justice and human service agencies and is an example of the Executive's commitment to more effectively manage criminal justice resources.

In addition, the 1999 Adopted Budget will add ten traffic officers to unincorporated King County and will expand police contracts with suburban cities. The Executive is proposing to open the last jail unit at the Regional Justice Center; add eight positions to the Criminal Division of the Prosecuting Attorney's Office to handle increases in felony, domestic violence, and sex offender cases; add ten juvenile probation counselors to the Department of Youth Services; and establish a Crime Analysis Unit within the Sheriff's Office.

The Sheriff's Office will begin implementing the Community-Oriented Policing and Problem Solving (COPPS) service-delivery model in 1999. The overall philosophy of COPPS is to improve the ability of the Sheriff's Office to prevent and solve crimes by working with community partners, better using crime data and analyses, applying good problem-solving techniques, and proactively developing crime prevention solutions. The Sheriff's Office Budget also includes proposals in support of COPPS including the establishment of a centralized crime analysis function which will enable the Sheriff's Office to solve more crimes, thus reducing the fear associated with crime; respond to citizen requests for closer interaction with law enforcement; deploy available resources more efficiently; and use alternatives to handling calls for service.

Additionally, the Sheriff's Office will establish a Youth Support and Enforcement Unit. Working collaboratively with the King County Prosecutor's Office, the State Department of Social and Health Services, and community service groups, this unit will increase the level of support provided by non-custodial parents. The formation of a Youth Support and Enforcement Unit will also allow for the consolidation of policing strategies aimed at the prevention of youth crime and the proactive support of positive youth activities.

The Department of Adult Detention is faced with managing a rising jail population. The 1999 projected Average Daily Population of 3,013 (which is an increase of 467 from 1998 Adopted levels) assumes another year of population growth and has created the need to place special emphasis on population management. In 1999, the last of the remaining units (14th) will be opened and one unit will be double-celled for half the year, which will require additional funding. Additionally, overtime funds will be needed to address increasing workload requirements.

The Department of Adult Detention will play a major role in the Executive's efforts to forestall the construction of a second Regional Justice Center (RJC). The dramatic increases in demand for justice services, particularly those associated with detaining offenders, led the County Executive to form a Swift and Certain Justice Team. This group, a cooperative venture by the Executive, King County detention facilities and courts, law enforcement, Seattle and suburban cities, will lay out a blueprint for more efficient use of criminal justice resources in the short and long-term.

The District Court 1999 Adopted Budget includes funding to support a pilot project to help King County determine how to more effectively manage its criminal justice resources through implementing recommendations from the Misdemeanor Study. This 1998 study found that defendants who fail to appear for court are twice as likely to go to jail as are defendants who do appear. District Court will be participating in a multi-jurisdictional effort to pilot and test a variety of recommendations designed to reduce failure to appear incidents.

King County continues its commitment to providing affordable housing to low income residents. The 1999 Adopted Budget provides additional funds to the Housing Opportunity fund, used to develop and preserve affordable housing for low income residents. It also adds funds to ascertain the number of homeless veterans in King County, to develop additional housing for people with developmental disabilities, and to develop housing options for people with chronic substance abuse problems.

Another new initiative in the budget is responding to the Endangered Species Act. As a result of the proposed Federal listing of the Chinook salmon, King County will spend approximately \$6.3 million to increase regional coordination among King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties, to educate the public, to do scientific review and analysis on habitat and to step up code enforcement and inspection. King County agencies have developed a workplan that addresses the policy, legal, technical, and community-based foundation for long-term salmon recovery, while also including implementation programs for immediate response for a healthier salmon environment. Activities and tasks have been organized under four program tracks: 1) Program Planning, Coordination and Project Management, 2) Public Outreach, 3) Technical Program, and 4) Implementation.

To encourage new development in accessible urban areas, Transit Oriented Development projects will combine housing, businesses and amenities near major transit centers. Pilot projects are underway in downtown Renton, near Overlake Park and Ride in Redmond and at Northgate in Seattle.

Further completion of the recreational 101 Ballfields initiative is proposed, including the South County Ballfield project at \$1.2 million; Preston Athletic Fields, at \$500,000; Cottage Lake

improvements at \$460,000; the East Lake Sammamish Trail master plan and preserve; \$650,000; Lake Sawyer acquisition; \$1.1 million, and the Sammamish River train paving, \$470,000.

As required by the Growth Management Act, King County will undertake a major revision to its comprehensive plan for the first time since the plan's adoption in 1994. The goal for the revisions in 2000 is to make sure the plan removes barriers to making growth management work in King County; improves usability of the plan; eliminates inconsistencies and improves public understanding on growth management issues. The plan will also address several critical issues, including King County's changing role as a regional government with significant responsibilities as a local service provider; the need to effectively integrate land use and transportation planning and the protection of Chinook salmon in accordance with the Endangered Species Act.

Integration and enhancement of our regional transportation system is a high priority for the region and a significant focus for the Department of Transportation (DOT) in 1999. The Transit Division of DOT has negotiated a \$600,000 contract with Sound Transit, the Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority, to help them prepare for implementation of light rail, commuter rail, and regional express bus service in the coming years. These services will be integrated with existing public transportation in the region, and will address many of the highest transportation concerns of our communities.

A "concurrency" program to allow development only if road and other services will be sufficient, is being enhanced by the Department of Transportation. Proposed actions include monitoring congestion on more corridors; linking the completion of roads projects to development; and giving greater priority to transportation projects needed for concurrency.

Significant new bus service has been added to the Metropolitan King County Transit system over the past several years as laid out in Transit's 1996 Adopted Six-Year Plan. By 1999, all of the service hours identified in that plan will be implemented and service levels will be at an all time high. King County also faces increasing congestion as employment and population in our region grow. We value solutions to the problem of congestion which will enhance environmental quality in our communities and increase mobility in the region. The Transit Division's 1999 Executive Adopted Budget includes a new \$500,000 advertising effort to encourage transit ridership and enhance public awareness of services. Transit aims to combat congestion and contribute to regional environmental goals through this new initiative.

Are there any major tax or fee increases in this budget?

The Department of Development and Environmental Services (DDES) is proposing to conduct a fee restructuring in 1999. Current fees, set years ago, do not reflect the costs of services. Many fees do not cover costs, while many others exceed the cost of production. The mix of products is unpredictable from one year to the next. The unpredictable mix of products has resulted in unstable financial performance and a fund that is in a deficit position. This fee restructuring proposal will revamp the current system so that all fees will recover costs of services, putting the fund on the road to financial health. This fee restructuring proposal will increase the Department's fiscal health and responsibility.

Park fees will be restructured so that that quality service will continue. Included in the Parks and Recreation 1999 Budget is a proposal to restructure pool and recreation fees. The average fee

increase is approximately 10 percent. The Department's user fees, which were last raised in late 1993, have not kept pace with inflation or similar fees charged by other local jurisdictions. Parks has also proposed a new Special Use Permit fee to recover the cost of reviewing permit applications which allow private development of public land. Applicants will be charged an average of \$500 per permit.

A slight increase to the Unincorporated Area Levy (UAL) allows for needed flood repair work, salmon habitat research in response to the ESA and additional traffic officers. The flood repair work will use approximately \$1.4 million of this increase, and is encompassed in the River Improvement Fund's Flood Hazard Reduction Plan. The salmon habitat research will occur in the Snoqualmie basin and will benefit from \$435,000 allocated from this increase in the UAL.

How many people work for King County?

For 1999, King County government will employ 13,217 FTEs, an addition of 611 FTEs from 1998 levels. Most of these adds are associated with expansion of transit services; increases in criminal justice agencies like Public Safety and Adult Detention; increases in the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Developmental and Environmental Services.

How will a person in unincorporated King County be affected by this budget?

The Adopted Budget will improve police services in unincorporated King County by adding six traffic officers and one sergeant. The sergeant and officers will be devoted exclusively to traffic and DUI functions to improve road use safety and to reduce alcohol-related accidents and fatalities. The addition of the officers will enable the Sheriff's Office to more effectively address citizen complaints about road use violations, particularly speeding complaints. It will also enhance the Sheriff's Office ability to enforce new State DUI laws.

The Roads Services Division will continue to implement its Flexible Response Budgeting. This new method of budgeting allows Roads to reallocate funding to high priority projects that are ready to be implemented. Examples of accelerated projects include widening and improving 228th Ave. SE/NE on the Sammamish Plateau for approximately \$17 million; widening and improving Avondale Road, including adding a crosswalk signal at Cottage Lake Elementary School, for \$2.6 million; replacing Novelty Bridge for \$8.8 million; and preparing environmental studies for construction of a new road linking the Sammamish Plateau Access Road (South Link) to the Issaquah-Fall City Road, at \$3.8 million.

The Department of Development and Environmental Services (DDES) will continue to fund the eight new positions approved in the 1998 ESA Supplemental. These positions are dedicated to enhanced enforcement, inspection, and review of development projects that have the potential of threatening Chinook habitat. Extra emphasis will be placed on preventing erosion and sediment from leaving construction sites. These positions are funded from fees charged on related functions. The fees approved as part of the 1998 Supplemental have been incorporated into the overall fee restructuring proposal for the department.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will engage in scientific research and analysis as part of the Technical Program Track of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) response. Focus will

be on gathering inventories of factors affecting salmon by Water Resource Inventory Area, including the Snoqualmie basin, as well as embarking on an analysis to construct a Habitat Conservation Plan framework. Information gathered will establish a base line for fish habitat, including riverine, estuarine and marine habitat. Specialized technical work groups will focus on water quality, forestry practices and drainage regulations.

Open space and natural areas will be preserved as part of the Transfer of Development Rights program. In 1999, the Executive is proposing a “bank,” funded at a proposed level of \$1.5 million that will “purchase” development credits from sending sites and “resell” them to receiving sites. An additional \$500,000 in transit funds is included to offer certain amenities, such as pedestrian facilities, bike lanes and bus shelters, to urban areas for “receiving” density credits. The separate 1999 Adopted Capital Improvement Program document contains more information about this initiative.

What Impact will the budget have on Health and Human Services?

The 1999 Adopted Budget for Health & Human Services reflects both the challenges and opportunities confronting the County in 1999. Programs that are primarily funded by Current Expense dollars are feeling the effects of slower growth in revenues and rising criminal justice costs. On the other hand, 1999 represents an opportunity for programs that receive money from other funding sources to refine and expand their programs to better meet the needs of King County’s most vulnerable residents.

For example, the 1999 Budget features a number of initiatives to improve access to affordable housing for the less fortunate. It provides additional one-time funds to the Housing Opportunity Fund, which develops housing for low-income residents. It also adds funds to ascertain the number of homeless veterans in King County; to develop additional housing for people with developmental disabilities; and to develop housing options for people with chronic substance abuse problems.

The 1999 Adopted Budget also reflects the County’s intent to better serve the needs of the people with mental illness and/or chronic substance abuse problems. The Adopted Budget transfers the Division of Alcohol & Substance Abuse Services (DASAS) from the Department of Public Health to the Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS). This change will allow DCHS to coordinate services provided by its Mental Health Division and DASAS. As a result, the Department will be poised to provide an integrated continuum of mental health and/or substance abuse services. The new organization will promote stability and recovery regardless of whether an individual is experiencing a short-term crisis or a chronic condition requiring ongoing and intensive support services. Clients will benefit from services provided in a comprehensive and integrated fashion, focusing on individual problem identification and treatment.